

# **Program Evaluation Survey**

---

## **CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THIS PROGRAM**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. County</b>                               | Contra Costa   |
| <b>2. Program Name</b>                         | School Challenge Teams   |
| <b>3. Mailing Address</b>                      | Contra Costa County Probation Department<br>50 Douglas Drive, Suite 201<br>Martinez, CA 94553-8500 |
| <b>4. Research Manager</b>                     | Mark Morris  |
| <b>5. Research Manager's Phone</b>             | (925) 335-1026   |
| <b>6. Person responsible for Data Tracking</b> | Mark Morris  |
| <b>7. Phone/Fax of Data Tracker</b>            | (510) 254-0911 <b>FAX</b> (510) 254-9185   |
| <b>8. Contract Researcher(s)</b>               | Mark Morris<br>(925) 254-0911  |

## **THE PROGRAM**

### **9. Briefly describe interventions that will be used in this program.**

Probation Officers will be sited in selected schools to supervise Probation wards who attend those schools and to work with school, law enforcement, and other agencies to provide early intervention or prevention services for pre-delinquent and some first offense youth.

### **10. Briefly describe, in general terms, the expected beneficial effects of the program (especially the benefits as they relate to what you are going to measure; e.g., if the primary dependent variable is "grade point average," then the goal would be to improve the grade point average.**

The overall goals of this program are to provide more consistent and effective probation intervention with youth and to promote safety at school sites.

Specific anticipated effects specific for youth served/supervised in the project include:

- improved school attendance and performance (grade point average; credits earned; standardized achievement test scores, if available)
- reduction in status and delinquent offenses
- higher rates of successful completion of probation and restitution requirements

Anticipated effects specific to the schools served include:

- improved overall attendance rates
- reduced overall level of reported crimes and on-campus incidents

### **11. Name and briefly describe the type of research design that you intend to use to determine whether or not this program produces the desired outcomes.**

Four schools will be selected for this evaluation. (The School Challenge Teams will work at eight schools; evaluation schools will be selected, in each of four areas of the county, based in part on accessibility of records.) At each school site, referrals at two critical decision-points initial referral and court disposition to Probation wardship will be randomly assigned to control or experimental groups.

In addition, four schools will be selected as comparison sites to assess the overall or school-wide impact of

probation presence at the school. These schools will be selected for their similarity to the "treatment" schools in the number and proportion of probation wards at the school, school attendance rates, and SES similarities.

Regarding outcomes for individual youth: random assignment to treatment and control samples, for both formal ward and early-intervention groups.

Regarding school-wide outcomes:

- pre and post measures of overall school attendance and incident/crime rates in intervention sites and comparable non-intervention sites;
- comparison groups of wards at each non-intervention school site (matched with wards at the comparable intervention school site); and
- process analysis/surveys of students and staff at intervention and non-intervention sites.

**12. Briefly describe the process evaluation research that you intend to conduct.**

Process evaluation will include on-site observation at intervention school sites and pre and post surveys of students and staff at intervention and non-intervention sites regarding perceptions of crime and safety.

**COMPARISON GROUP**

**13. Will there be a comparison group?**

Yes

**14. If you answered 'no' to #13, how will the effectiveness of the program be evaluated?**

NA

**15. Will the treatment and comparison group subjects be randomly assigned from the same pool of subjects?**

Yes

**16. If you answered 'no' to #15, what kind of comparison group will you use?**

NA

**17. Briefly describe the process for identifying and assigning the comparison group subjects.**

Two separate entry or decision points will be used: initial referral (by school officials, police, etc.); and assignment to probation supervision by the Court. At those points, youth will be randomly assigned either to the on-site Probation Officer or to regular processes. In the case of initial referrals (early intervention cases) youth will go through whatever school/police disciplinary/counseling activities are standard or be placed on the site Probation Officer's caseload. In wardship cases, youth in a particular school will be assigned either to the School-based caseload or to non-school Probation Officers for that area of the County.

**18. List the criteria for participation that must be met by the comparison group subjects (e.g., age, probation status, gender). Next to each, list the level of the variable that will be used for subject selection (e.g., age 12 or higher, ward of the probation department, males).**

Because this involves random assignment, the initial criteria for inclusion in the study are that the youth be either referred and/or placed on Probation and that they attend one of the selected schools. (The intervention schools will include three high schools and one middle school.)

Analysis will compare control v. experimental wards and control v. experimental initial referrals.

**19. List any other independent variables that you will be collecting for the comparison group (e.g., risk assessment score, legal history, grade point average, school attendance, drug use).**

Risk assessment scores, prior school attendance and grades, standardized achievement test scores (if available), prior delinquency history.

**20. Will the comparison group be matched to the treatment group in terms of any variables?**

Yes

**21. If you answered 'yes' to #20, list the matching variables that will be used.**

We will monitor the comparability of the treatment, control, and non-treatment school comparison groups as they accumulate, looking at age, gender, ethnicity, referral offense, and risk assessment scores. If significant differences begin to emerge, we will adjust the sampling procedures or sample sizes as needed.

**22. If you answered 'yes' to #20, briefly describe how the comparison group will be matched to the treatment group.**

See question 21.

**23. If you answered 'no' to #20, briefly describe why you believe that the treatment and comparison groups will possess the necessary comparability.**

NA

**24. How many subjects will participate in the comparison group during the entire course of the program?**

We expect to follow a sample of at least 100 treatment and 100 control youths in each of four schools, for a sample size of at least 400 in both groups. In addition, we will follow comparison cases in four comparable "non-intervention" schools. It is not yet clear how the samples will break down between the early intervention and wardship cases. Because the comparison cases in non-intervention schools will be matched only with the wardship sample in the intervention schools, we do not know at this time how large the sample from non-intervention schools will be. The sample selection will continue at least through March 1999 or until the target sample sizes have been achieved, whichever comes later.

400

**TREATMENT GROUP**

**25. Briefly describe the process for identifying and assigning treatment-group subjects.**

Random assignment at point of referral or assignment to formal probation (wardship). See item 17.

**26. List the criteria for participation that must be met by the treatment group subjects (e.g., age, probation status, gender). Next to each, list the level of the variable that will be used for subject selection (e.g., age 12 or higher, ward of the probation department, males).**

Fact of referral/wardship and attendance at school which is an evaluation site. Subsequent review of sample to ensure comparability with control group on age, gender, ethnicity, and risk assessment score. See items 18 and 21.

**27. List any other independent variables that you will be collecting for treatment group (e.g., risk assessment score, legal history, grade point average, school attendance, drug use).**

Risk assessment scores, prior school attendance and grades, standardized achievement test scores (if available), prior delinquency history.

**28. How many subjects will participate in the treatment evaluation research samples?**

We expect to follow a sample of at least 100 treatment and 100 control youths in each of four schools, for a sample size of at least 400 in both groups. In addition, we will follow comparison cases in four comparable "non-intervention" schools. It is not yet clear how the samples will break down between the early intervention and wardship cases. Because the comparison cases in non-intervention schools will be matched only with the wardship sample in the intervention schools, we do not know at this time how large the sample from non-intervention schools will be. The sample selection will continue at least through March 1999 or until the target sample sizes have been achieved, whichever comes later.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTIONS**

**29. List the interventions that only the treatment group will receive (interventions that are not received by the comparison group). Next to each intervention, state in measurable terms, the goals of the intervention. For example, a goal might be: "to improve reading level of program participants."**

Youth in the wardship cohort will receive more intensive, on site, supervision, with more immediate consequences or responses to misbehavior/delinquency, than youth under "regular" probation supervision. (Contacts at the school sites could be daily; contacts in regular supervision are seen about once monthly and the initial contact could be up to a month following court disposition.) The Challenge Teams will also be aggressive in making and monitoring referrals to specialized services designed to improve school performance and/or reduce risk factors such as family problems.

Youth in the early intervention cohort will also receive more immediate, extensive, and on-going supervision than is typically the case for youth facing school discipline, police diversion, or even 654 (informal probation) supervision.

**30. List the interventions that only the comparison group will receive (interventions that are not received by the treatment group).**

Youth in the control groups will receive "regular" services/interventions. These are largely school disciplinary measures or counseling, and/or regular probation supervision. In either case, the level and intensity of intervention will be lower than for youth in the experimental groups.

**31. List the interventions that both the treatment and comparison groups will receive (i.e., in what ways, in terms of interventions, will the treatment and control subjects be treated in the same).**

Both groups will experience some level of sanctions.